

Editorial preface

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At the same time as the International Phonetic Association embarks on its second century, so the Journal, with a change of editorship, is also turning a corner. What lies ahead for *JIPA*? A long and smooth road, let us hope; a familiar but perhaps in some senses a broader one.

In the face of today's proliferation of professional journals, *JIPA* retains an altogether distinctive flavour. It is inconceivable that *JIPA* should not continue its special tradition of publication and annotation of phonetically transcribed samples of languages. Phonetic description will continue to be promoted in its own right. For those readers who teach phonetics, these kinds of material are invaluable as a source for the fundamental exercises of ear-training and transcription practice.

On the other hand, from the point of view of *JIPA*, one might wonder further about these goals of documentation and skill-training. Are they enough of a staple diet for a modern phonetics journal? Has the emergence of vast database collections of phonetic descriptions (e.g. Maddieson (1984)) removed some of the urgency for purely descriptive efforts? Far from it, we suggest. First we should remember some of the limitations of these databases (as their authors readily recognise): the standards of the source descriptions are uneven; the coverage of languages is uneven, and there is a tendency to restrict database descriptions to segmentals at the expense of suprasegmentals.

But these limitations are by no means the full story. As we see it, there is immense scope for widening the base of the material which phoneticians take as the focus of their transcription. A glance at the shelves of today's linguistics bookseller is enough to remind us that the field has seen a shift of emphasis in recent years, away from linguistic abstraction towards a growing interest in language use: sociolinguistics, language in contact, text linguistics, language variation, impromptu speech, language acquisition, language disability, synthetic speech, to name only some. These areas of interest offer new opportunities for phoneticians to provide samples of transcription and analysis of a much broader range of data than the standard language sample (or even the standard dialect

sample). There is a need, in any given language, for transcribed and commented samples of not just 'experimenter-generated' speech, but of spontaneous speech, of children's speech, of conversation, of disordered speech, of foreign learners' speech, of speech at different rates (and other kinds of prosodic variant), of female *versus* male speech, of formal *versus* casual styles, and of other kinds of speech variation. We would like better descriptions of articulatory settings for dialects and languages, a more widely agreed framework for voice quality description, and more studies of personal characteristics in speech. Now all these desires mount up to a very considerable programme. What is more, to make progress in fulfilling them would do a service to more than just the narrow confines of academic phonetics. We have the opportunity to do something useful not only for those practitioners like clinicians and language teachers whose needs we have been long familiar with, but also now for the burgeoning speech technology industry, which is clamouring for better phonetic knowledge, especially of running-speech characteristics.

To do these things substantially better than before, phoneticians have not only to address new kinds of speech data. To even the most isolated researcher, the available tools (apart from our ears and eyes) have changed enormously in recent years. The idea of a basic, even portable, phonetics laboratory has long been canvassed by our President among others: measurements such as air-pressure and flow are not beyond its capabilities. But recently, as we all know, things have gone much further. The familiar personal computer can be routinely equipped with facilities for speech capture and analysis. As a result, new knowledge comes within the grasp of every phonetician; and with it perhaps we can set ourselves new targets and expectations in our descriptive work. When it seems useful to do so, it will henceforward be easy to illustrate phonetic description with PC-generated spectrograms, spectral sections, waveforms, formant plots, F_0 curves, and F_0 distribution histograms. It is equally straightforward to use the same hardware to support one's observations by statistics, and by graphs.

There seems to be a growing place, in other words, for the kind of phonetic account which is derived not necessarily from a strict experimental paradigm in a state-of-the-art laboratory, but where today's instruments are used as a support for the investigator's ear. This is not, we hasten to add, because the ear is inadequate, but first and foremost because instrumental records are visible and reproducible. There seems no reason, for example, why the standard language samples which the Association publishes should not be accompanied by such things as formant charts or duration measurements - not to mention audio recordings. There seems no reason either, when our findings have implications for phonetic theory or for

language universals, not to make use of new tools in relating those findings to current work which relies even more heavily on experimentation, such as research in speech motor control, say, or in speech perception. *JIPA* hopes to encourage these orientations.

On a different note, we hope that new horizons can be shown to the wider audience of phonetics practitioners. Writing from Oxford, it is relevant to recall that the vision of the father of phonetics here, Henry Sweet, was that phonetics should be beneficial for the teaching and learning of languages. Our new Educational Phonetics Editor will be arguing that Sweet's vision is not as close to realisation as it should be; and that *JIPA* should help to further those efforts. More than that, phonetics should be seen to be beneficial to those other applied users such as clinicians, voice trainers, lexicographers, and technologists who we hope to include more extensively in our readership. To do this, applied phonetics will become a more visible concern of the Journal, and we shall attempt in our pages to seek contributions from those practitioners, which will better inform phoneticians on how, and with what priorities, today's consumers actually use phonetics.

We expect there to be other themes in these pages, apart from applied ones. Revision of the International Phonetic Alphabet will be a recurring one; we are planning an issue which takes phonetics software for personal computers as its theme, and another one on voice. Further suggestions for themes (with or without the offer to coordinate the contributions themselves!) are welcome.

Finally, and most obviously, *JIPA* has changed in physical appearance. In the past, the Journal has been set at the printers with hot metal press. For this and subsequent volumes, camera-ready copy is being produced at Oxford using desk-top publishing facilities on a Macintosh Plus computer. For this number of the Journal we have used the MacWrite word-processing package, but this has limitations that have become apparent during the production of the issue, and it is hoped that a switch to a more powerful package, MacAuthor, will result in improvements to the layout. We hope that readers will take an indulgent view of our teething troubles, and we would welcome their reactions to the new format, particularly to the font that we have chosen (Helvetica). For the printing of phonetic symbols we have used the IPA symbols package developed at UCLA. We are also acquiring a font creation package which will allow us to design any additional symbols that may be needed. Although we continue the policy that contributors should adhere to IPA conventions, we realise that additional symbols will sometimes be necessary, especially in contributions to the debate on the revision of the Alphabet. Contributors who wish to submit their papers on disc will find more details in the 'Notes for contributors' at the end of this issue.

In due course we hope that the switch from conventional printing methods to desk-top publishing will make the production of the Journal both cheaper and more straightforward than it was in the past, thus ensuring its regular and punctual appearance.

References

MADDIESON, I. (1984). *Patterns of Sounds*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.